

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR"

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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STRANGE WATERS.

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BOOK I.

CHAPTER VI. COUSIN ALICIA.

WAS the curate to call his cousin, "Madame?"

It was a difficult question, for he felt he did not remember her since the old days—not the least in the world. He knew she was a remarkable, even eccentric, woman; and that she had been a great deal abroad, which, no doubt, accounted for certain foreign, or, at least, un-English, ways that she had about her. She even, he noticed, affected a foreign accent, and he thought it became her. Altogether, he thought he should have a great deal to tell Bessy when he got home. But, meanwhile, what was he to say? He really wished to make an excellent impression, now that his pride was once swallowed. To be called Alicia, after the Countess of Quorne, would be no disadvantage to the little temporary Bessy in after years, and even the curate of St. Anselm's, though he had given up fast bowling, was still a man.

There were several ways open to him by which he might begin a conversation; and he reviewed them all. He might say, "It is a long time since we met;" but then that would imply a rebuke concerning the cause. On the whole, he had better wait for his cousin to suggest Bessy, if she pleased. Or, he might tell her that she was looking very well; but then, why shouldn't she? On the whole, and after due reflection, he felt it safest to fall back upon the easiest and most neutral of all topics. Why should travelled English-

men sneer at one another for always beginning with the weather? We ought to be grateful that we have a weather, if only as the safest, most elastic, most universally applicable means of opening a conversation in the world.

"It is a very fine day—after the storm," said Gaveston. "But," he added, on mature reflection, as if he had gone too far, "I'm afraid last night put an end to the strawberries."

"Strawberries?" asked the lady with a quick smile. "Ah, you know? It is very strange, monsieur, how quick all the stories run about—about me, I mean. Tell me what they say. But, monsieur, will you not sit down? It is tiresome to stand. It was 'great fun'—as you say."

"The story?"

"You have not heard? No? Not how I went last night in a cabaret, The Five Adzes, and drank beer with the men? And, Gran Dio, how they sang! It was just like the Grand Opera."

This Lady Alicia Gaveston—this the Countess of Quorne? It is not too much to say that the curate was shocked, and began to think it just as well that he had not brought Bessy. No wonder she was "hail fellow, well-met," with vagabond painters. Tales of the increasing depravity of the upper classes had reached Deepweald, and Gaveston had always refused to believe scandal of English ladies, and of his own order, for he had passed that extreme youth, when men think it fine and knowing to believe all evil. But when it came to a Countess of Quorne going into a village public-house, and drinking beer with the men—surely it was time for Church and State to part, and for the world to come to an end. He knew the

countess was Bohémienne, and he was not strait-laced; but this was going too far.

His face had not much expression, but it is precisely expressionless faces that are most capable of looking shocked most readily. The lady must have seen it over her fan; her glance passed to his white cravat, and then to the ends of his long whiskers, and a smile of malice passed for a moment through her eyes.

"Yes. It was great fun—as you say. We drank beer out of pewter, very bad beer; and they smoked, oh, such tobacco—I smell all over of it now—it is in my hair. And I flirted with a gamekeeper, till I made the *filles de chambre* divinely jealous. It is better, yes, than Park-lane. Ah, you should see how they looked when I sang to them. You know The Five Adzes, monsieur? No?"

"At Laxton?"

"That is his name. I forget my English—but never mind."

"You have been a great deal abroad?"

"Abroad? Why, I come from abroad now, when I came to London. I like England, but I like abroad best—there it is free. I like to be free."

"Exactly so," said the curate, without a tinge of hypocrisy.

"And The Five Adzes," said the lady, resolved to enjoy the expression on the curate's face as long as possible. "I think I shall go there again on Saturday evening. They are better than the great people—*Corpo di Bacco!* It is stiff here. I am republican to the heart; I love the poor."

The curate was growing aghast with dismay. Everything seemed turning upside down. Of course, as a clergyman, he loved the poor too; but the phrase, as a phrase, sounded odd to him, and a republican countess, and that countess a Gaveston, was a monstrosity. What did Lord Quorne say to it all? But as to that, he knew that Lord Quorne's heart, though sound, was a cucumber; and he strongly surmised that his cousin Alicia was one who would have more to say to her husband than her husband to her. But what would the county say? Counties are not easily put down, even by countesses.

"There are not many really poor in your own neighbourhood," said Gaveston, feeling himself talking to his cousin Alicia more and more as if she were a stranger in blood, as in all other things, "but there are many in Deepweald; and in my own parish, St. Anselm's—"

"Ah! I will see. And then I met

there a young man, a painter; a very handsome young man. Do you know who?"

"Ah—that's how she picked up Gordon!" thought Gaveston. "And she invited him to her house, I suppose!"—"Oh yes, I know him; that is, I used to—at Oxford, I mean."

"Oxford? Ah yes, I know Oxford. There are a great many young men. Who is he?"

"Fancy picking up a painter in a pot-house, and asking him to Hinchford!" thought Gaveston, now thoroughly disgusted. And he felt a pang of not unnatural jealousy too; here was he, Lady Quorne's own cousin, asked to Hinchford in a way that was nothing less than an insult, while the door seemed opened to any chance vagabond who chose to enter. He was a good-natured young man, but he did not feel good-natured just then, and small blame to him.

"Oh, his father is a cotton-spinner at Manchester, or one of those places." Deepweald looked down upon Manchester.

"A cotton-spinner?"

"Yes—a manufacturer, you know. He was well-off at Oxford—at least, he seemed so, for there's no knowing anything about people in trade. Then he went off without a degree, and was going to be a barrister, but I suppose the truth is, they were ruined, and he had to do what he could. He seems to have done nothing but knock about all over the world it seems—anyhow, he hasn't a penny now. He told me so."

"He has been rich, and is poor? And an artist, then—a real artist, monsieur?"

"He told me he is a painter, and hasn't got a penny. I should have thought he could have done better than that—but I'm afraid there's something wrong."

"It is always wrong to be poor," said the lady softly, and the curate thought, a little bitterly. "And real artists are often poor. Never mind, it is the world. I am glad I have seen you, so that I know. I like that young man. He is handsome, and he is alive. It is good to go into The Five Adzes, now and then. Are you poor?"

The curate blushed and stared. He thought of Bessy, and did not know what to say. But she did not seem to remember her own question.

"Yes, I like him," she went on. "And he was good about the garde-chasse and the strawberries, and the *femme de chambre*. He gave me a lesson; I keep some temper,

I. Yes, if he is young, and an artist, and good-hearted, he would be poor. But never mind."

"He said he was going to paint your portrait."

"Ah!" she said with a bright look of pleasure. "That is a good idea. Yes, he is to paint my picture—I shall sit for him. Does he live at what you call—Laxton?"

"I don't know where he lives. I haven't seen him for years. He seems to be tramping about the country now."

"What is his name, monsieur, if you please?"

"She asks him to Hinchford, and doesn't even know his name!"—"Gordon—Walter Gordon."

"Gordon!"

The bright smile passed with a vengeance. All her languid, easy grace of posture grew rigid, and she started as if a snake had stung her. All tragedy came back into her face and her frown, and the music left the voice as she almost hissed out the name. Gaveston had never seen such a transformation in his life before. He too started, almost alarmed.

"Yes—Gordon. Walter Gordon. That's his name."

"Ah! I have pain sometimes—but it is soon over. There, monsieur." And she fanned herself back into resolute sunshine, let herself lie back on the sofa again, and took a new caprice—utter silence, as if the curate of St. Anselm's, and her own cousin, were a nobody.

He sat back in his chair, pulling his whiskers, in the resigned state of a man who has fairly made up his mind that he really has nothing to say, and has given up trying. And so they must have sat for full five minutes, he embarrassed, she at ease, when a footman came in with a note on a silver salver. He brought it to Gaveston. Gaveston took the note, looked at the lady, who bowed permission. The note was in Bessy's hand. What could it be? He read it, and turned pale.

"Come at once; I have sent a fly. Little Bessy is very ill.—BESSY."

All the poor fellow's shyness and embarrassment were swept away. He loved his wife well, though mildly; but he dearly loved the child who had put heart even into whisker-pulling. His own heart sank as he handed the note to the lady. She looked surprised at first; but she read it.

"You have a little girl?" she said after a curious look at his white choker,

as if it were awry. "Ah, monsieur." The words sounded like a deep sigh.

"Only one," he said. "I must go."

"Only one? Yes—it is always that; it is always the only one." A new mood was on her—the curate was too much taken up with what he might find at home, to catch an accent in her voice that sounded more like fierceness than sympathy. "Yes—you must go. But wait—an envelope and paper," she said to the footman. "And quick—you hear?" she said, with a little stamp and a frown.

"Is she going to write to Bessy?" thought the curate, miserably.

But she only scribbled a word or two, with her back to him. Then she handed him an envelope, addressed in the most sprawling of hands, simply to "Bessy."

"Now, monsieur—go. Open this yourself when you are at home—not before."

"I am so sorry," said the curate, whose instinct of politeness was not to be forgotten. "Pray make my excuses to Lord Quorne. Perhaps—another time—"

She saw his emotion, and her eyes, which had in this short interview well-nigh passed into every passion under the sun, were now filled with tears of sympathy. She pressed his hand; and in another moment he was in the fly, posting back to Deepweald after his fears, as fast as he could bribe the driver to make the wretched screw go.

The poor fellow was not thinking of his cousin now. But had he been, and could his thoughts have shown her to him, he would have seen her pacing, striding rather, from end to end of the white drawing-room, as if she were in a prison, and burning to be free. There was no longer the fierce frown on her face that he had seen there and wondered at; but her face had the mask off—it is doubtful if her mirror even had seen her as she was now. And it is doubtful if any man now would have called her beautiful. Can you tell what I mean by fixed and ingrained rage?—not the effect of passion, or of many passions, but a savage look, as of some dangerous animal whom the hounds are after. It was as if some heavy blow had fallen upon her, and left the mark for ever, just as it fell. It is hard to describe; but if she knew that look of hers, and wished to feel herself beautiful, it is not wonderful that she should dislike solitude. Walter Gordon had thought the storm over the coffee

unsurpassable in its dramatic intensity. He should have seen her now—only one never sees such a look as this on the stage. It was unspeakably sullen and cold and full of pain—and hungry, too, in a strange kind of way.

There is nothing much more terrible in life, than to follow one's flying thoughts of ill with a slow horse, and a driver that will not put him to a pace beyond his immutable routine. The Medes and Persians, combined, had regulated the pace of the screw from The George at Deepweald. Gaveston felt as if riding a race between life and death; life creeping after, death galloping before. He was a single-minded man, and, as yet, his heart had no room for anything but impatience. Would the milestones never come? He had never thought that a journey could be so long. He tried closing his eyes, to prevent their watching for the milestones and so keeping them away. He looked at his watch a hundred times—and, strange to say, the minutes galloped while the fly crawled. Life was creeping along the road, death flying round the dial.

At last the beautiful gray cathedral tower, rosy once more in the sunset, just as we used to see it and love it years ago, stood out against the sky. Restorers are doing their accursed work on it now, and bad luck to them, for no mortal eye will ever see the exquisite rosy gray of Deepweald tower again. No wonder Deepweald looked down on Manchester and on everywhere. It was very beautiful. Do you remember how it looked—years ago—one broiling day in June, when the Reverend Reginald Gaveston read Tennyson to a Dorcas meeting in general, and to Bessy Swann in particular, while the Deepweald eleven were hard at work on King's Mead; and he, fast bowler as he was, had given up the sport and the cider-cup and all, to read poetry, that neither he nor his audience understood, among fifteen ladies in a furnace, for the sake of a pair of gray eyes waiting for him now? He remembered it all, you may be sure—it was just such another evening as this, but for the heat, and the cathedral tower with its cawing guards looking just the same. But the eyes? He thought of them very tenderly. Were they still watching for him, and wondering when he would come? Or were they—he could not bear to think of it, and wiped his own. And what had that cathedral tower not seen since Deepweald was a town? it was half a comfort

even to Gaveston to feel that it was there; a tower of sympathy—the visible part of joy and sorrow to all in common who lived under its shade.

At last he was under its shade, through the Close and at his own door. He forgot to look at the windows to see if the blinds were drawn.

"Bessy?"

His wife herself had opened the door.

"Oh, I am so sorry," she said gladly.

"Look here!"

And there, surely enough, was Bessy in her cradle—as well, considering all things, as need be. It seemed a shame to have wasted so much emotion.

"Thank God!" said the curate. He had a heart, though not a very lively one, and it came out every now and then.

"But then—if she wasn't ill, Bessy——"

"But she was ill—and she frightened me. So I sent for Doctor Adams, but he was out, and so was the assistant, and I couldn't send for Mr. Black all at once—and so—I didn't know what might happen——"

"Well?"

"And I sent for mamma too—and I'm glad I did, for she's seen me like that dozens of times, she says, and she put baby to rights in no time. Another time I shall know what to do," she said proudly; and I am not sure that she would be altogether sorry if it did happen again, that she might set it to rights, as her mother had done before her. Mothers are a peculiar people.

"And you're sure she is all right—sure?"

"There wasn't time to call back the fly—it had gone. But oh, I am so sorry I've brought you back from Hinchford; but I couldn't help it, when baby might have died. Have you dined, dear?"

"No," said the curate. He could not help feeling a little vexed; and no wonder. To have swallowed his pride and not his dinner was certainly more than a little hard.

"I'll send for some chops. I'll never do it again. But baby, you see——"

"Never mind, dear," said Gaveston, resuming his severely mild dignity of demeanour. "It is vexing, but never mind. After all, it's perhaps what I deserve, for going to Hinchford. Yes—chops will do very well, Bessy."

They had to do very well; for marketing in Deepweald after sunset was unknown, except on Saturdays.

"I am so sorry," said Bessy over again.

"But you see, baby—— Tell me, dear; you've seen the countess, and the earl?"

"I've not seen Lord Quorne. But I had a long talk with Cousin Alicia in the white drawing-room."

"Oh, that is charming! Tell me about her, please! Was she glad to see you? Do you think there's any chance of baby's being Alicia—a lovely name; Alicia Gaveston—quite aristocratic? And how was she dressed?"

"She was dressed—let me see—in black something——"

"Velvet?"

"No. It was more like lace than velvet. It was lace, I suppose. And she wore pearls—very fine pearls."

"Yes?"

"That's all, I think. And she had a black fan."

"Black lace and pearls. She must be in mourning. No diamonds?"

"Not that I saw. I think, though, she had a diamond ring."

Bessy had indulged some visions of copying the countess at first hand; but black lace and pearls were obviously not to be thought of. "And how does she do her hair?"

"Let me see, it's golden."

"Surely not, Reginald! Why, where were your eyes? Surely it's brown. In the photographs it's always brown."

"I'm afraid, Bessy, that—in fact, I believe there is a fashion in London of making brown hair into golden. And I am the more convinced of it from the fact that Alicia's hair used to match her eyes, which were dark, very dark gray."

"And what's she like to talk to?"

"Bessy, I'm sorry to say that I'm glad you did not go to Hinchford." That she had not been invited was ignored between husband and wife by tacit convention.

"Why, dear?"

"Because Cousin Alicia may be a countess, but she's not a proper person to know. There'll be a scandal some day."

"Good gracious, Reginald!"

"She goes into the pothouse at Laxton, and drinks, and smokes, and sings in the bar-parlour. She swears—in foreign languages, it is true, but still she swears. She picks up vagabonds, whose names she doesn't know, and invites them to Hinchford. She talks about how she flirts with the servants. And she's a professed republican. I suppose she's lived in France till she's forgotten how to talk English, and doesn't know if she's on her head or her heels."

"Reginald! How dreadful! How shocking!"

"It's true. I was thinking of how to remonstrate with her when your note came."

"But perhaps you're mistaken? The ways of the aristocracy, you know——"

"You forget, Bessy, that right is right and wrong is wrong."

Poor Bessy! All her castles had come down with a run. Reginald's foot once within Hinchford, what might not follow? Anything—everything. He would be reconciled to his grand relations. Lord Quorne would give him a living. She would be invited to dine and sleep, and she would be able to talk about the Countess of Quorne as "my relative," or "my cousin by marriage," or "my little girl's god-mother," as the case might be. And now her own husband had as good as told her that Lady Quorne was not respectable! The Countess of Quorne not respectable! What then did respectability mean?

And what was she to say in Deepweald, about the great Lady Quorne?

Musing upon all these things, as she folded up her husband's best clothes, a letter fell from the breast-pocket. She took it up, it was addressed in a strange handwriting to "Bessy."

As she was Bessy, and as she knew of no other that could read, she naturally opened it, supposing it to be some message to her that her husband had forgotten to give her. It proved to contain two Bank of England notes of fifty pounds each, and a slip of paper on which was written, "For the poor of the parish of St. Anselm."

BY THE RIVERSIDE.

MESOPOTAMIA.

THERE was never but one man I really envied, and I certainly did not envy him either for his physical or mental qualities, for he was a Frenchified Englishman—a John Bull in the frogskin, so to speak—a creature given to many affectations, both of dress and address. There are few more curious sights than a square-shouldered, bullet-headed Briton in a French coat, through which his burly person threatens to burst at every moment, and topped by a French curly-brimmed hat, beneath which his rosy features loom moonlike and vast. My friend had in perfection that look—as of a stuffed mango—which is conferred upon a plump person by French clothes. Moreover, he wore

light-coloured gaiters many years before that device for increasing the apparent size of the foot became fashionable in this country, and had besides a knack of smoking cigarettes, and that habit of spending a disproportionate sum of money in gloves as compared with washerwomen's bills, which can only be acquired by a lengthened residence on the continent of Europe. He was not therefore to be envied, as it seems to me, on general grounds. The circumstance which made me look upon him as exceptionally happy was his privilege to lead a triangular existence as it were; his year being equally divided between London, Paris, and New York. He was, I believe, in some way remotely connected with "dry goods," and probably smuggled the same into New York; but this was none of my affair. He lived, during his annual visit to the island of Manhattan, at the most expensive hotel in that expensive region, and entertained his friends most sumptuously with terrapin soup, canvas-back ducks, and other delicacies peculiar to the country; at Paris he dwelt in snug bachelor apartments, fared sumptuously every day, and paid any sum necessary to secure a seat at the theatre on first nights. In London my friend belonged to a quiet club, where he dined and wine his friends hospitably enough, and led generally the life of a man whose "something in the City" seemed to depend on his presence in the Park, at Epsom, Ascot, and Goodwood, and other agreeable haunts. He maintained that the only pleasure he derived from his triangular life was that of perpetually abusing the country he happened to inhabit for the time being, and instituting disadvantageous comparisons between it and his other homes; but I thought him the most fortunate of men, envied and hated him accordingly, and covertly dropped cigar-ash on his natty gaiters when opportunity served. I am sorry now that I did so, for he died, poor fellow, shortly after Sedan, to the grief of his friends, who sincerely regretted him—and his terrapin soup and his canvas-back ducks. Moreover, I am not so certain that he was so happy after all as many of my friends in the Northern and Midland districts of this tight little island. Everlasting London and Brighton, Paris and Trouville, New York and Long Branch, require a tremendous constitution—as my poor friend found out—to cope with them; while my Midland friends can enjoy, especially at the present season, delightful

jaunts into moorland. They are keenly alive to their advantages too, both Liverpool "gentlemen," Manchester "men," and Sheffield "chaps." As early in the spring as it is lawful to wet a line they dart off to Ashopton, to Rowsley, and Darley, and other angling haunts, and, on the festival of St. Grouse, the crack of their breech-loaders may be heard on the Bradfield moors, and other great stretches of purple heather to the North of the Peak country. The journey is so short, too, for these happy Midlanders. They can almost step out of their forges and foundries, their mills and factories, on to the breezy moorland; and it is an easy matter to exchange the muddy waters of Sheaf and Irwell for the bright currents of Wye and Derwent. An hour, or at most two, will suffice to take them from the darkened sky, the smoke-laden atmosphere, the dingy streets, the roaring of the blast furnace, the clink of the forge, the sighing and moaning of great engines, and the incessant clatter of the smaller fry, to a sunset bright with a thousand wondrous hues, an air pure, bright, and invigorating, and a landscape of surpassing splendour. Down the smiling valleys rush brawling streams, beautiful, sparkling, and troutful. Above the meadows rise the hills, clad with a mantle of many tints of green, and above this again peeps out the broad purple shoulder of the moor. The sounds of Peakland differ widely from those of inner Hillamshire. In place of the wailing and shrieking, as of Titans writhing under their tremendous task, the sweet murmur of running water gently woos the ear, grimy streets are replaced by meadows fringed with ranunculus, and the clatter of the mill by the hum of bees. Half-choked and entirely worried man forgets for the moment his last disastrous contract, his blast furnaces damped down, his desperate struggle for existence. Anxious consideration of the attitude of the workmen gives way to a study of the flybook, and long consultations as to the state of the weather and the water. The Derwent may be too thick to tempt the most determined of Waltonians, while the Wye is in perfect condition, and the water promises abundant sport.

The Mesopotamia formed by the Wye and Derwent at Rowsley is famous for its inn. The "gentlemen," "men," and "chaps" previously mentioned, all know The Peacock at Rowsley, the name of the pretty village being pronounced variously in Derbyshire—a country having its own peculiarities

in this respect. For instance, Derby is pronounced Darby, except by the inhabitants of the county town, who follow the spelling closely enough to almost satisfy the troublesome people who wish to bring orthography down to the level of block-heads, instead of training them up to it. Still the sound is, perhaps, nearer to Dairby than Darby—the “r” being very distinctly enunciated. In like fashion, Rowsley is pronounced Roseley in the village itself and its immediate neighbourhood, while in the North and in the Midland counties generally it becomes Rousley. Perhaps, to enjoy The Peacock thoroughly, it is best to arrive there at night, or during a heavy downpour of rain—no rare phenomenon in Derbyshire—as the beauties of Mesopotamia are then completely hidden from the naked eye, and there is good cheer within to pass the time withal. There is, too, leisure to notice the curious old house said to have been in years gone by the dower-house to Haddon-hall, farther up the valley of the Wye towards Bakewell. Be this true or not, The Peacock, by turns farmhouse and inn, is a building of respectable antiquity, as the walls of enormous thickness testify. It would make a modern builder absolutely shed tears, to contemplate what he would call the sinful waste of material displayed in the construction of this old house. The partitions are as thick as the walls of a modern mansion, and the outer walls are some seven or eight feet through. As I open the little casement of my bedroom, I notice the tiny diamond-shaped panes and the old-fashioned fastening, and look on to the dark night, through which the pelting rain makes itself heard distinctly enough. This is not a cheering sound to the angler’s ear. Swollen streams, thick and turbid, are ill-adapted to the exercise of his art, and I should go sorrowfully to bed had I not been placed beyond the reach of care by the discussion of a certain shoulder of venison, followed by a Bakewell pudding, a local delicacy, something between a maid-of-honour and a jam-tart. Shoulder of venison in the southern part of this island is not understood, and is therefore condemned as an inferior part, and relegated to the making of soups, pasties, and the like. It is otherwise in Derbyshire, or, at least, at The Peacock, and it should be so, for do not those lovers of venison—other people’s, by-the-way—Robin Hood and Little John, lie buried just over the hills in Hathersage churchyard?

I confess that, when I was told I could have venison for dinner, I expected a neck at least, and was just a little dashed, when I heard that it was only a shoulder. I am far too polite a man to hint any disappointment to Mrs. Cooper, the skilful and courteous yet stately hostess, and therefore posed myself as a martyr, imagining that a tough and skinny joint was about to be my portion. To my astonishment, the dreaded shoulder appeared stewed whole, in a sauce which passeth description. After working my wicked will upon it, I was fain to seek Mrs. Cooper, and ask her how this feat of converting the shoulder of a buck into delicious meat, and unapproachable sauce, was achieved. She was kind enough to tell me that the shoulder in question was stewed until tender in good, honest stock, with onions, spices, and savoury pot-herbs; that the shoulder and the herbs being taken out of the stew-pan, the gravy was thickened with a little butter rolled in flour, flavoured with port-wine and currant jelly, strained, skimmed, and poured over the joint, which was then ready to be served up. I should like to suggest this treatment to my own cook, but to tell the truth, I am afraid to introduce a shoulder of venison to the notice of that dignified female, whose idea of the quantity of meat required to make stock is of the most capacious kind. Like Mr. Timmins’s mother-in-law, I take leave to think that a shoulder of venison stewed in the stock made from a leg of beef, a leg of veal, and a ham, would be an expensive dish; and I therefore forbear the experiment myself, and, with large-hearted philanthropy, present the recipe to those readers of *ALL THE YEAR ROUND* whose cooks may chance to be more tractable than mine.

The Peacock venison has inclined me to look cheerily upon the future, and I therefore, shutting my ears to the pattering of the rain, drop off into a sweet slumber, and dream that Robin Hood, Little John, Friar Tuck, and myself, are about to dine in Hathersage churchyard, that Bess of Hardwick is cooking the dinner, and that we are all going to Doncaster afterwards to see the Leger, on which my friends have an excellent book, according to the showing of the worthy friar—who, being the only member of the confederacy who can write, is entrusted with the clerical part of the business.

Morning brings other weather and other thoughts. Through the little casement

pours a stream of bright pure air, with the genuine mountain sparkle in it. The sky is of a clear unclouded blue, the hill-sides of the most brilliant green. In the trim garden of The Peacock walk a couple of persons, concerning whom the most unpractised eye can make no mistake. I thank heaven for the fine day, that I may get abroad and revel in the air and sunshine, for to be shut up through the long hours of a drenching day in a country inn infested with "young lovers, newly wed," is a doom too frightful to contemplate. Having acquired, during a lengthened residence in the United States, what are called in that great country "habits of observation," I read the names on their trunks as I was smoking a cigar in the hall of The Peacock last night, and am aware that the mawkish creatures walking about the garden are no other than Mr. and Mrs. Pelham Cholmondeley Thwytle, of Sheffield. When and how, I should like to know, did the names of Pelham and Cholmondeley become grafted, or rather fitted as a handle to the good, old, plebeian Thwytle? And how long will this Sheffield blade retain the fine temper, thanks to which his arm winds round the substantial form of Mrs. Pelham Cholmondeley Thwytle? They ought not to quarrel, these people, for they are evidently well supplied with the world's goods, and have youth to enjoy the same; but, alack! so had Percy FitzTudor and his wife, and good looks into the bargain. I mind me well of that handsome couple, when they came on to Brussels, and of their pretty little ways towards each other. How popular they were, too, at Homburg, and what nice little dinners they gave during the season at their little doll's house in Mayfair! It was only one season they enjoyed in this pleasant fashion, for the shattering of the household gods came the week before Goodwood. Percy, poor fellow!—though old Lady Barbican says he ought to have looked after his giddy young wife—is yet the object of much sympathy. They tell me, though very quietly, of course, that he has found consolation; and the redness of his nose lends colour to the report. As for his wife, she has vanished—gone for ever into the shadowy borderland which encircles the known world. But what have the FitzTudors to do with the Thwytles, and what concern have either with my day's fishing and strolling in pleasant Mesopotamia? The Derwent, which I have permission to fish down to Matlock, is, I hear, thick, of course; while the Wye is nearly

clear enough for angling purposes. I satisfy myself of this by a stroll down the meadow to the spot where the two rivers meet; the Derwent comparatively slow and dignified, and the Wye, noisy, hurried, irrepressible. Although far less in volume than the Derwent, it dashes at that quieter stream, and thrusts it aside for the moment; just as little, fussy obtrusive creatures of human kind override their betters, who, rather than argue the point, let them have their way for a time. The Derwent stands aside for awhile, reduced by the violence of its junior partner to a mere backwater, but is not very long before it quietly asserts the power of capital, and the little demonstrative Wye becomes lost in the greater individuality of the Derwent, as the latter serves at last as a humble tributary of the Trent. "There is not in the whole world a valley so sweet," sang Moore, of the vale of Avoca; and it must be conceded to that most harmonious of poets that the "meeting of the waters" often affords an interesting scene. That of the Thames and Medway is worth seeing: the rivers run side by side for a long way in the most majestic manner, as if unwilling to compromise their dignity by any concession until sufficiently far from the shore to be safe from observation, when they are reconciled by their common friend the sea, and forgather happily. Far less simple is the junction of the Rhone and Arve, below Geneva. The "blue rushing" of the "arrowy" river avails no more against the muddy, glacier-fed stream than the swift charge of Rupert's Whitehall gallants, ringleted, perfumed, and beplumed, against the sullen rage of the Puritan battalions. With tremendous speed and dash the azure torrent comes on, but is thrust aside by the dark-hued flood, which will make no concessions. Side by side they flow, a double river, clear as sapphire on the one bank, dark as Phlegethon on the other; the line between them being as sharply drawn as by a pencil. Onward they pass, blue-blooded aristo and travel-stained proletarian, yielding nothing, gaining nothing, till—their initial force spent—they mingle at last and roll onward past industrious and turbulent Lyons, dreamy Avignon, and bustling Marseilles to the sea.

It is also pleasant, while the aroma of Berncastler Muscateller still clings to the palate, to watch from the old Mosel bridge at Coblenz the quiet, simple, kindly way in which the Mosel makes acquaintance with

the Rhine. There is no obtrusiveness on the one side, no sullen attempt at repudiation on the other. Perhaps this arises from their being no question of rank and precedence involved in the union between Rhine and Mosel—the glory of the Rhine is so completely incontestable. Without counting Siegfried and Haghen, Brynhild and Chriemhild, and the Nibelung treasure they fought and quarrelled about, or poor damp Loreley, the Rhine is par excellence the river of story, and the river of power and beauty as well. The Rhine bears about the same relation to the Mosel that Pitt did to Addington, or London does to Paddington; or, to be more intelligible, that Johannisberger (Schloss) bears to Zeltinger; there is, therefore, no attempt on the part of the pretty little Mosel, who has seen really nothing of the world beyond Metz and Trèves, to rub shoulders independently with Rhine. It drops in as a humble vassal as it were, and doffs its light blue cap as it pours its contribution at the feet of its suzerain. It is otherwise when one free and enlightened river meets another in the great Far West. When Mississippi—the Father of Waters, as it is absurdly called—meets Missouri, there is a struggle for supremacy, and each river has its army of sympathisers. The Mississippites take their stand on antiquity, on the foolish Indian name which confounds the son with the father, on maps and on newspapers; while the Missourites appeal to the facts of physical geography, to the greater length of the Missouri previous to its confluence with its fraudulent partner, to the far greater length and importance of its tributaries, and to the greater specific gravity of its current, charged with material carried away from overhanging banks. It is as “close a thing” between the two great rivers as between rival candidates for the presidency.

Far less important is the debate between Derwent and Wye in the meadow lying beyond Mrs. Barker’s pretty garden, and forming the extreme point of Mesopotamia. I am not aware that the inhabitants of Rowsley, Edensor, and Bakewell have ever come to serious disagreement as to the merits of the rivers which flow past their respective villages; and if they have, I am not interested in the quarrel. As I pause opposite the tongue of land which divides the rival streams, I am knee-deep in long grass and yellow ranunculus, my hat is full of mushrooms, and such mind as is available at early morning is bent on

breakfast—the early meal of Izaak Walton, “mostly a pipe,” being altogether too unsubstantial for a stomach constructed for the reception of buckwheat cakes, ham and eggs, and rolls saturated in butter, with other light and digestible articles of diet. I care just now very little for the respective length and merits of Derwent and Wye, and steer straight for The Peacock. “Old Sol,” as sporting writers of the last generation familiarly called him, has a knack of paying flying visits to Derbyshire. Like the lady’s feet in Sir John Suckling’s song, the luminary peeps in and out as it were, and is just now seriously overshadowed. As the newspapers do not arrive at Rowsley till long after breakfast, I am spared the misery of knowing that Erie is higher and Turks lower, and fall like a tiger upon the excellent food set before me. The clouds are favourable, and I determine to fish up the Wye to the Lathkill. A gentle breeze just ruffles the water, and I set out in the society of an elderly clergyman, a regular client of The Peacock, who knows every inch of the water. Perhaps at other times I should not care for the companionship of the Rev. Mr. Robeson, as we might fall into an altercation concerning orientation, genuflexion, the baldacchino, the birreta, and the rest of it; but he is a delightful companion by the riverside. When we were undergrads together, our modes of life varied greatly. I kept a bull-terrier, he a Persian cat; I rowed, while he smoked cigarettes; I read Bell’s Life, while he studied the French poets. Yet we liked each other—I can speak for one at least—very sincerely, and I was heartily glad to meet him in Mesopotamia. He is an energetic fisherman, and a skilful. He is said to be able to throw a fly at the end of thirty yards of gut into a teacup; but as I have not seen him perform this exploit, I am prepared to declare, attest, solemnly swear, nay, to bet my own money and stake the same, that he cannot do it—no, not in half-a-dozen attempts. But he is a clever angler for all that, and if any fly can coax the hesitating fish, it is his. He does not, after the fashion of fly-fishers generally, get his tackle into difficulties with the trees and shrubs, and—confound him!—he has landed three plump pound-and-a-half trout before I have had a rise. The rain now comes on sweetly, and for a short while the “speckled beauties” fall victims to our skill or luck; for there must be luck, or

why should Robeson, whose sermons are a mere farrago of sophism and verbiage, kill a brace of trout to my one? As the rain thickens, Robeson suggests that, as we are under the shadow of Haddon Hall, we may as well go in out of the rain, and we accordingly make for the little wicket-gate in the old portal. As the appearance of this famous old mansion of the transition period between the fortified dwelling and the country house has been painted, and written about, and photographed, till it is at least as well known as the Tower of London, I will spare the readers of *ALL THE YEAR ROUND* a fine piece of descriptive writing, and many veracious particulars concerning the court kept here by the king of the Peak, that Sir George Vernon, whose daughter, Dorothy, ran away with John Manners, son of the Earl of Rutland. The most interesting part of the old house to me is the doorway, known as Dorothy Vernon's door, which leads by a flight of steps to the terrace-grounds, and the avenue of trees known as Dorothy Vernon's Walk; but my friend Robeson is worrying himself over the tapestry—ghostly old stuff—and muddling his brains over the innumerable carved boars'-heads and peacocks, the crests of the families of Vernon and Manners. To antiquarian persons the great merit of Haddon Hall is that it has not been inhabited—save by housekeepers, and such small deer—for two hundred years, and that, therefore, the house remains as it was, undefaced by modern improvements. It has been uninhabited, and I know an English freeholder, with a vote for the county, who could not be hired for money paid in advance to sleep for one night in its tapestried chambers. The method of execution of the worthy ladies who sat Penelope-wise at the head of their handmaidens, and directed the thousand and one stitches by which the effect was to be produced, is beyond all praise. But the designer—what manner of man was he? Probably of near kindred to the limner whose pleasant and appetising picture of Tomyris hangs over the fireplace in the long gallery. The Scythian Queen is represented with the head of Cyrus, and about to give it that ghastly draught which supplies the painter with a fine patch of colour.

Taking Haddon on the whole I prefer it by daylight, although I could well spare the crowd of tourist folk who follow the weary guardian to and fro. These visitors hail from all parts of the Midlands and the

North, and comport themselves with varying degrees of roughness. They canter up and down the big gallery; they intrude in most unmannerly fashion upon young artists busied in sketching bits of the old house; they stamp on the floors, and play at hide-and-seek through the rooms. Worse than this, they understand nothing of what they see. They are innocent of guide-books and maps, these good people, and care infinitely more for a bit of horse-play in the meadows by the Wye than for legends more or less truthful of Peveril of the Peak.

Mr. Robeson and I have a wet walk back from Haddon to The Peacock. It is astonishing how pouring rain and a light fishing-basket lengthen a journey. There is, however, one comfort. Wet we may be, and tired, and disgusted with shy trout, and the not over-shy tourists, whose talk is of Chatsworth, the great "show place" of the county, but by no means so interesting as Haddon, or that Hardwick which gave its name to the celebrated Bess. Chatsworth, when all the grandes eaux are playing, when cascade on cascade streams down the hill-side from the immense reservoir up on the moor, is splendid enough as a palazzo of the modern time, adorned with carvings by Gibbons, and painted ceilings, whereon "sprawl the saints of Verrio and Laguerre." But the visitors—the forty thousand and odd who are allowed to ramble over the place yearly. With the same "foolish face of praise" they stare at vases, and tables of malachite and porphyry, priceless drawings, and comparatively valueless pictures of royal, noble, and distinguished personages. It gives me a Timonic twinge as I see them, after an unappreciative stare round a room filled with pictorial gems, pull up with many an "Eh-h-h lass!" and so forth, before Sir Joshua's picture of the Duchess of Devonshire with her baby. But possibly I am ungenerous in consequence of the coyness of the trout, and must be content to "bide a wee" before the real art treasures of Chatsworth will be appreciated as they deserve.

Over the moors to Chesterfield, and thence to Hardwick Hall, is a glorious drive through mixed moorland and sweet pastoral country, only here and there defaced by the ugly chimneys which mark the up-cast of a colliery. The ancient house, built, like the Chatsworth which preceded the present palazzo, by the famous Bess of Hardwick, is, beyond all comparison, the

finest Elizabethan mansion I have seen; and with its enormous windows makes me wonder how our ancestors lived in the fearful draughts which all their wealth of tapestry could hardly keep out; and more especially, how the excellent Mr. Hobbes, who lies buried in the church of Hault Huchnall hard by, enjoyed his tobacco in the too airy apartments. Hobbes had a much better time of it, however, than the poor little excommunicated Jew Spinoza, from whom he "adapted" the majority of his ideas, like a keen-witted private tutor as he was. My friend Robeson does not love Hobbes or Spinoza either, and my remarks concerning them as we trudge through the wet meadows from Haddon irritate him not a little. He complains, in the fretful tone of a disappointed man, that he does not mind missing a day's sport, but that I have no right, having caught an unfortunate clergyman in the country, to make his life a misery, by experimenting upon him, as in corpore vili, the effect of my forthcoming article in the *Transcendental Review*. Poor Robeson! it is cruel I know, but such a chance may never occur again. Nevertheless, I change the subject, and hold forth on the badness of the school attendance in the neighbourhood, but with no better success. Finally, I come to the conclusion that my friend is suffering from the sulkiness brought on by hunger, and leave him in peace, while the trout we have captured, and a brace of plump, well-conditioned grouse, are being cooked to a turn for our dinner. This important event over, I become passive, and listen, with the patience of the Chaldee patriarch, to an eloquent and lengthy exposition of the present condition and future prospects of the Established Church, while the rain comes down like an avalanche on the solid roof of The Peacock at Rowsley.

UNDER THE DREAM-TREE.

In a trackless garden a tree is growing
Of strangest flower, of sweetest fruit.
Ah! how declare to the dull world's knowing
What dreams are dreamed by that rare tree's root?
Or what the burthen of that wild lute,
By hidden fingers flutly played,
Whose music maketh the night-bird mute,
Under the dream-tree's tender shade?
The tranced breeze o'er that garden blowing
Lingers by it on airy foot;
So rich the scent of those clusters glowing,
So rare the sound of that hidden lute.
Pains or perils shall none compute,
Which bar the paths to that secret glade,
In view of joys that the heart salute
Under the dream-tree's tender shade.

Silver floods are flowing, flowing,
Ripple on ripple in gay pursuit
Of soft shed rose-leaves slowly snowing
From bending branches of slender shoot.
Though visions throng by that rare tree's root,
Joy, unfettered and unafraid,
Wakes at call of that hidden lute,
Under the dream-tree's tender shade.

Love, why lingerest? Still that lute
Woos thy feet to the rose-walled glade.
Come! ere the mystic music's mute,
Under the dream-tree's tender shade.

UNLIMITED LOU'.

A STORY IN TWO CHAPTERS. CHAPTER I.

SHE was not very young. In her moments of confidence, and they were many, she would credit herself, I believe, with "eight-and-twenty summers." The parish register would perhaps have debited her with a dozen or so more. She was not very lovely. Her mouth was just a little too large, her eyes just a trifle too small, her lips just a morsel too thick, her hair just a shade too thin, her forehead just a line or so too narrow, her nose just a hairsbreadth too wide, her hands just a thought too red and bony, her cheeks just a suggestion too yellow and plump—for ideal beauty even of the least classical type. But she was emphatically what might be called—in courtesy at all events—a fine woman. The popular opinion that she stood seven feet in her stockings, must, I think, have been an exaggeration. Rumour, however—based in this instance upon the statement of an indiscreet friend who had persuaded her to entrust herself for a few moments to a railway weighing-machine—was no doubt correct in assigning her a weight of something over sixteen stone. She signed herself, in a little German-looking hand, Louisa Abbott. We called her "Unlimited Lou'."

We, that is, of Kleine-Fussbad, where Louisa, severely virtuous in her condemnation of the sin of gambling and of all who indulge therein, had now for some few years been doing her best to bring the local administration to a sense of their iniquity, by a wholly gratuitous participation in the numerous advantages held out by it, at a heavy annual outlay, to attract the votaries of the *trente-et-quarante*. "If everybody," she would say, with calm superiority, when mildly chafed upon the choice of a residence, "would do as I do, and make use of these people's gardens, and balls, and concerts, and all the rest of it, without throwing away their money

upon the tables, all this wickedness would soon come to an end." Which was no doubt very true. Meanwhile, however, the majority of the visitors to Kleine-Fussbad paid their tribute readily enough, and the wicked administration still found it remunerative to invest a considerable percentage of the profits of their wickedness in making things pleasant for their victims. It must be owned that this sort of participation in the profits of wickedness, without any share in the wickedness itself, made life in Kleine-Fussbad, after Louisa's pattern, not only virtuous, but economical, and even pleasant.

Previously to her settlement in her present quarters, Unlimited Lou' had been living at Grosse-Fussbad, about a dozen miles off. Grosse-Fussbad was one of the big watering and gambling places, perhaps the biggest of all, and looked down with lordly contempt upon its smaller and less prosperous neighbour. I shall never forget the superior air with which the presiding employé, who evidently recognised me as a denizen of the rival establishment, knocked my poor little stake off the roulette, the first time I drove over from Kleine-Fussbad for a day's outing. I had been playing a small half-florin progression of my own invention, on the single numbers, with very happy results at the latter place, and, as the course of the game seemed favourable, thought I might as well have a try for the day's expenses. For the first few coups the stakes stood at the regulation minimum of one florin, and were duly raked into the bank without remark. But by-and-by they rose to a florin and a half, and then the great brass-edged rake came swiftly down upon the offending coin, and with a click and a "Ça ne va pas," sent it flying almost into my lap. I remonstrated mildly that I had been allowed to play such stakes at Kleine-Fussbad. "Possible, monsieur—les dimanches," was the haughty reply; "but for the moment it is Tuesday—and we are not at Kleine-Fussbad." Les dimanches! There was the rub. Grosse-Fussbad was in Prussia, and the Kleine was not. And virtuous Prussia, allowing even then no gambling on Sundays—except, of course, in her own State lotteries—felt naturally a virtuous indignation at the thought of the numbers of her own week-day votaries, who flocked on that day to her impertinent and ungodly little rival just across the frontier.

Notwithstanding, however, the drawback of this enforced Sunday-closing movement, Grosse-Fussbad, with its huge kursaal, its strident band, and its gas-lighted Cremorne of a garden, drew to itself by far the larger portion of visitors; so large a proportion indeed that the administration of Kleine-Fussbad had some ado to keep their more modest establishment afloat at all. Whence it came that, in the four or five months of the season, rents in the bigger town were two or three times as high as those of its smaller rival, while the tradesmen of the latter, instead of the thousand-per-cent. profits of their more fashionable neighbours, were compelled to content themselves with a modest hundred or two. Of course, however, this fact had nothing to do with the migration of Unlimited Lou'. She, as we all know, changed her quarters solely on account of the slight access of rheumatism which she had contracted when spending some weeks with her dear friend the Viscountess Webbefute, at her ladyship's ancestral home among the Lincolnshire fens, and for which the private physician of her other dear friend, the Countess of Chalkston, had particularly recommended the baths of Kleine-Fussbad.

Farther back than Grosse-Fussbad and that ancestral mansion in the Lincolnshire fens, Miss Abbott had not as yet been traced. Opinion, indeed, was somewhat divided at Kleine-Fussbad on the subject of her origin and precise social status. Mrs. Brown of Manchester, Mrs. Torrington Jones of Cheapside and Tavistock-place, and Lady Robinson, the wealthy and highly-respected relict of the late Lord Mayor, were all convinced of her being a lady of the highest and most unexceptionable family. Indeed, Lady Robinson, who had herself moved (for twelve months) in some of the very highest circles, was almost certain she had 'ad the honour of meeting Miss A. before, though whether it was at Court or at the 'ouses of one or other of the nobility, Lady Robinson could 'ardly venture to say. The Glanvilles, on the other hand, had no doubt she was a very excellent person, but smiled a little at the mention of her aristocratic pretensions, whilst little Tom Chatfield, of the F. O., who knows everybody, laughed them to scorn.

"Know Lou' Abbott, my dear fellow? Unlimited Lou'? Should think I did. Knows me too."

But for once little Tom Chatfield seemed to be wrong. The words were hardly out of his mouth before Louisa herself came sweeping by, and a look of more absolute non-recognition, than that with which she encountered his somewhat exaggeratedly profound salutation, it would be difficult to imagine.

"He! he! he!" sniggered Tom, when chaffed upon the subject of this very evident cut direct. "She won't turn up again while I'm here." And then Tom told us the story of his previous acquaintance with Unlimited Lou'.

"It was at Scarborough," he said, "when I was there three years ago with my aunt, Lady Oldcastle. Horrid, vulgar place, you know. But the old lady's got a pet doctor there, and goes every year. Well, the very first day at dinner who should turn up alongside of us but Unlimited Lou'. The old lady's a pretty fair hand at putting people into their places; but, by Jove! Lou' was too many for her. Regular pachyderm, you know; hide like a rhinoceros. We complained of a draft from the window, and changed our places; but the next day there was Lou' at our elbow again. This time we found we were too near the door, and though the proprietor clearly thought us very troublesome people, he obliged us once more, and put us right away at the farther end of the table, half-a-mile from door or window either. Awfully hot it was, and my poor aunt, who isn't thin, you know, had to keep her fan going like a windmill. But we flattered ourselves we had got rid of Unlimited Lou'."

"And had you?"

"By Jove, sir! not a bit of it. Next night there she was again, affectionate as ever. Thought the old lady would have had a fit. She was within an ace of leaving the table and going straight off to town by the night mail, when, just at the moment, I caught the head-waiter's eye. The scoundrel was grinning, sir, absolutely grinning. As soon as dinner was over I had a brief private interview with that head-waiter, and next evening Lou's chair was occupied, and her place marked, quite at the other end of the table."

"And did she spot you?"

"Well, yes, I think she did. At least I happened after dinner to be passing the open window of the head-waiter's private den, and I heard Lou's voice—rather loud. Bad form, you know, listening, but it was really much too awfully tempting."

"'Didn't I give you half-a-crown,' she was saying, 'to put me next my particular friend the marchioness?'"

"'Very sorry, I'm sure, miss,' says he, and I could almost hear the beggar grin; 'but, you see——'"

"'Well?'"

"'You see, miss, the marchioness, she sent me a suvvin to put you somewhere else.'"

On the whole, this, the only bit of positive evidence we had been able to obtain, rather told against poor Lou's pretensions. Some people, too, were cruel enough to say that while the matter of her conversation was always concerned with what she was pleased to term the ancestral halls of the aristocracy, its manner perhaps rather of the two favoured their servants' halls. It was a great day in poor Lou's calendar when those two dear old bodies, the Ladies Harriet and Anne Mackenzie, who would give away the very clothes off their good-natured backs if it weren't for the look of the thing, actually accepted her invitation to tea, and came clambering up her five steep flights of stairs, with the thermometer at ninety in the shade. But her triumph was short-lived. Lady Harriet and her sister did not cut her—I don't believe that anything short of proof of some act of cruelty to a child or a dumb animal could induce those dear old birds to cut anyone—but they fled from Kleine-Fussbad by the eight-o'clock train next morning, and never came back again.

"My dear," said Lady Anne to my wife, in a moment of special confidence some months afterwards, "I have never whispered a word of this to anyone but yourself, and I wouldn't have it get about for the world, but that dreadful woman—poor thing! I'm sure I'm very sorry for her, and so is Harriet—she was keeping the tea hot for us by wrapping up the teapot in her own flannel——" And here the good old lady suddenly broke off, just lifted a tiny fold of her well-preserved old black satin gown—she meant to have bought a new one this year, only poor Charlie Shiftless's children did really want some fresh frocks—nodded, frowned, plied her big green fan vigorously for a moment or two, and changed the subject.

One thing, however, is tolerably certain. Whether Lou' has been, as she asserts, a welcome guest in those ancestral halls of which she has so many fond reminiscences, or whether she ranged them only in a stipen-

diary capacity, and was duly pensioned off when her services were no longer required—or no longer endurable—she has at all events managed to carry with her into her present retirement a considerable show of relics of those halcyon days, some of them by no means without their value.

Lou' lives, as has been said, up five flights of very dirty stairs, performs her cooking operations, when alone, in her tiny sitting-room—when entertaining company, in the tinier bedroom beyond, whose window opens into the six-foot-square ventilating shaft, ingeniously designed for the accommodation of such minor casements as must otherwise have marred the symmetry of either the front or the rear façade. The window of the sitting-room, which is not luxuriously furnished, lacks a blind; and rather than go to the expense of the few kreutzers that would procure one, she pins up in its place a mighty garment—necessary but nameless—not delicate in texture, but very much of that peculiar tint which appears now so fashionable for blind purposes, and which fills a room with a sort of murky glare, as though the sun were shining through the bottom of a brass coal-scuttle. There are, in truth, but very few shifts to which Lou' will not have to resort for the economising of an extra pfenning. When she lived at Grosse-Fussbad it was a very favourite operation of hers to arrange with three or four acquaintances, not versed in the customs of the place, for a drive to Kleine-Fussbad at joint charges. Now the spirited administration of Kleine-Fussbad, which knew well that very few of the golden geese of holiday society fluttered, even for a day, around its tempting tables without leaving behind some of their feathers, was always willing to pay half the cost of such a journey. Lou', who of course was always kind enough to take the trouble of pecuniary arrangements off the hands of her inexperienced friends, used, in a full season, to make a very fair little weekly income in this way.

But it is only due to her to say that all this was matter of choice, not of necessity. Taking all things into consideration—and there was one point in respect of which, when expenditure had to be incurred, it was not stinted; even when she dined at home Lou' never starved herself—she must, I should imagine, have spent considerably under a hundred a year. I take it there were very few years in which she did not "put by" at least that amount.

Nor was it money only that Lou' had brought away with her into retirement. The famous teapot, which had been kept warm for poor Lady Anne, was of solid silver, beautifully chased, and duly matched by cream-jug and sugar-basin. The quails, and pigeons, and other succulent morsels, so delicately stewed in the grimy tin "Etna" in the frowsy bedroom that opened into the ventilating-shaft, made their appearance in the sitting-room under the rich silver cover of a gorgeous muffin-dish. Her fork—I believe she had only one, which was duly wiped at each change of dish on a piece of bread—was of Britannia metal, or whatever yet dingier substitute for that horrible composition is current in Germany; but her teaspoons—and she had five of them—were of real king's-pattern, weighing Heaven knows how many ounces each. Various pieces of really valuable china, too, had Lou', and a very fair collection of small articles of jewellery. But the gem of the whole, the pride and joy of Unlimited Lou's rather limited heart, was "her pearls."

I am bound to confess that pearls were not becoming to Lou'. When she came out—as on state occasions, such as the free balls at the Kursaal, she would come out—en grande tenue, in a gushing "froek" of white muslin, with a coronet of pearls upon the thin, closely-plastered hair, a pair of pearl earrings hanging from the big ears on either side of the broad flat face, a triple string of pearls around each red wrist, and one magnificent row supporting a delicate cross upon that bony neck, it must be owned that a less pleasant object it would not be easy to imagine. But the pearls themselves were beyond reproach, and if not actually beyond price also, were unquestionably of very great value.

Poor Lou'! Will she ever forget that memorable occasion on which she last appeared in all the glory of "her pearls?"

It was not often that our administration at Kleine-Fussbad went the length of giving a ball. It was an inexpensive form of entertainment enough—costing, in point of fact, nothing but the extra gas in the ball-room; but there were other than economical objections in the way. In a large place like Grosse-Fussbad, and among the thousand or two of visitors to be found there on any day of the season, there will always be a considerable number who are really of no value to the administration, except for the players

who follow in their train. That is the class for whom the balls are intended, and Grosse-Fussbad gave one every week. With its small rival, a ball meant providing a couple of hours' employment for people who might else be dropping, perchance, a stray florin or two, in sheer despair of finding anything else to do. So our administration was not given to that form of entertainment.

It so happened, however, that there had been at Grosse-Fussbad an extraordinary run of luck in favour of the tables. For the last three weeks nobody had won anything, and as it was a recognised institution for the losers at the one establishment to endeavour to reconp their losses at the other, there soon set in a marked exodus in the direction of Kleine-Fussbad. This was, of course, a movement to be encouraged, and the administration gave a grand ball for its encouragement accordingly.

Lou' was in her glory. Not only were "her pearls" displayed in all their splendour; not only had she, after some deliberation, gone to the expense of having the famous white muslin frock washed and got up by the best laundress of the place, and inked the worn edges of her big kid dancing-pumps till they really looked almost as good as new. All these preparations she had been known to make before, even to the purchase of a couple of yards of broad blue ribbon to belt in her delicate waist. But this time Lou's sacrifice on the altar of Beauty had gone even farther than this. Whether the addition was a simple concession to the demands of fleeting fashion, or whether any whisper had reached her ears unfavourable to the contrast between those elegant bracelets and the red, creased wrists they encircled, I cannot say, but this time the three rows of pearls were clasped round a pair of twelve-buttoned gloves. Where these Brobdingnagian adornments could have been picked up is a mystery to this day. Rumour had it that they were one of a half-dozen manufactured expressly for a Frankfort house on behalf of the Baroness Silberschmidt—popularly supposed to weigh over twenty stone—and returned by that lady as too big in the thumbs. However that may be, they accommodated themselves to Lou's thumbs perfectly; and though they cracked a little across the back of the hand, and two or three of the lower buttons had to be removed and replaced on a tiny bit of tape half an inch

or so beyond the edge, the general effect was admirable.

Was it a sense of this unwonted gorgeousness of array which made the little heart flutter so wildly within that mighty bosom? Or was there some unconscious, instinctive sense of a coming crisis, some blind presentiment of the pangs by which that tender, and not unpractised organ, was so soon again to be thrilled? Poor little heart! With how many an altogether unrequited passion had it ached and thumped in all those fort—I beg pardon—all those eight-and-twenty years! To any call, not of course of mere foolish "charity," but of real, romantic, gushing "sentiment," how open it was still!

It was unfortunate for Lou' that emotions such as these were not favourable in their effect upon her personal appearance. There are soft white skins and damask cheeks on which the delicate rose-tint comes and goes, leaving them with each change only lovelier than before. Probably, nature had none such in stock big enough to endow poor Unlimited Lou' withal. That saucy young scapegrace, little Jack Mordant, who ought to have been whipped and sent back to Eton, instead of being allowed to corrupt his morals and forget his cricket at Kleine-Fussbad, used to say that her "sallow old hide," as he irreverently termed it, had no blood in it at all, and only blushed yellow. It was blushing its very yellowest this evening. The atmosphere, too, was close and hot, and Lou' being rather of what the doctors term a "full habit," yields all too easily to atmospheric influences. Altogether—and in spite of "her pearls"—Lou' was not, it must be owned, looking her loveliest. She stood before the great mirror over the fireplace, and as she gazed, a blank look stole over her broad, flat face. Poor Lou' herself was beginning to doubt.

There is in the world no such true and faithful friend as your looking-glass. It will tell you the bare, ugly truth, of course, if you wish for it. But it has a delicacy of appreciation you will find in no other friend, and will make quite sure that you do wish for it first. Until it has so made sure, it will, as a rule, repeat, without wearying, whatever flattering tale you may desire. But even this true friend fails us sometimes, and Lou's mirror was failing her now.

Still it would not be without a struggle that Lou', whose faith in her own charms had hitherto been, at the least, as unlimited

as anything about her, would abandon that faith even at the imperative bidding of her treacherous ally. There was something wrong, no doubt, with the lighting of the room. The glass itself, too, was of course in fault. All these German glasses are wretched things. Why, look at little Mrs. Mynniver, about whose white skin all the men rave so idiotically, and whose plump little bare shoulders are visible just under Lou's great red elbow. Lou' is quite certain that, in the glass, those ridiculous little shoulders are looking yellower than any guinea. Whilst as for figure—ah! there the glass cannot libel you. And Lou' draws herself up in proud consciousness of her five feet eleven inches, and turning her broad back upon the faithless mirror, confronts the gathering crowd again with renewed courage.

The room was beginning, not exactly to fill—the somewhat too ambitiously proportioned musik-saal of Kleine-Fussbad has never yet been known to do that—but to assume, at least, something of an inhabited aspect. The band was in its place, and the brief preliminary crash had already given notice that the opening quadrille was about to commence. Slowly, here and there, among the scattered crowd, little nuclei of enthusiastic dancers determined not to lose a solitary opportunity, were beginning to crystallise into lines and squares. A second crash of warning, a little more sharply accentuated than the first, had set off some twenty or thirty couples on a false start. Another minute or two, at the utmost, would see the squares completely formed, and the opening quadrille in full swing. It was an anxious moment for Unlimited Lou'. Experience had taught her that now was, beyond all question, her best, if not her only, chance. By-and-by, when the evening was a little farther advanced, and the queens and princesses of Fussbad "society" should have arrived, every man in the room would be engaged a dozen deep. But this first dance? How many a girl had Lou' seen, especially in public ball-rooms where the necessities of formal introduction were not too severe, invited, nay, even implored, to fill a gap in its ranks, who, for the rest of the evening, was doomed inevitably to a place along the wall! Lou' did long to dance just one dance.

But the invitation to fill the gap—and it would have been a terrible gap indeed that Lou' could not effectively have filled—did not come. From the vantage-ground

of her five feet eleven she could see over the heads of all the women and most men in the room, and watch the growing squares in their gradual development. There was no gap left now. The final warning had been rapped out by the conductor's stick; the real opening crash had come; the first figure was in full career. The chance was gone, and Lou's heart sank.

Suddenly it gave one mighty bound—almost into her very mouth—and stood still.

OLD FRENCH ACTORS.

BARON.

SOMEWHERE about 1630, a young tradesman of Issouden, in the province of Berry, commissioned by his father to dispose of sundry articles of merchandise at a fair held at Bourges, was so fascinated by the performances of a troop of strolling actors temporarily located there, that he volunteered to join them, and being accepted, accompanied them for several years in their country wanderings, until he felt himself sufficiently at home in his new profession to brave the ordeal of a Parisian audience. The date of his first appearance at the Hôtel de Bourgogne is not given, but it probably took place between 1636 and 1640, for it is certain that he played before Louis the Thirteenth, who died in 1642. He owed, indeed, to that monarch the appellation by which he and his descendants are popularly known, his real name being Michel Boyron, which the king having by mistake pronounced Baron, the alteration, probably as sounding more euphonious, was henceforth generally adopted both by himself and by the public. His success, especially in tragedy, was so decisive that he at once took his position as one of the leading members of the company; and shortly after married an actress of great beauty, of whom the following anecdote is related. She enjoyed in the highest degree the favour of Anne of Austria, and was frequently present at the royal toilette; whenever she was announced the Queen turned to her ladies in waiting, and simply said, "Voilà la Baron!" upon which all, even including Madame de Motteville, unwilling to appear at a disadvantage beside so attractive a visitor, vanished with one accord, and left the new-comer in possession of the field.

The career of Michel Baron, which had commenced so brilliantly, was cut short

by an untimely accident; while playing Don Diègue in Corneille's *Cid*, he struck with his foot the sword that had fallen from his hand, and received a slight wound, which he imprudently neglected until in the course of a few days mortification ensued, and he was informed that in order to save his life he must submit to amputation. This he steadily refused doing, saying that a tragedy king with a wooden leg would inevitably be hissed off the stage, and that he preferred dying. In spite of all remonstrances he persisted in his resolution, and expired October 6th, 1655, in the flower of his age.*

The reputation of the elder Baron, although by all accounts justly merited, was destined to be completely thrown into the shade by that of his son, likewise christened Michel, the *Roscus* of the French stage, who, according to the extract from the baptismal register produced by his family after his decease, was born in Paris during the month of October, 1653. This date has, however, been contested, it being generally supposed that the great actor was at least six years older than he professed to be; but as he himself was invariably reticent on the subject, and disposed to quarrel with anyone who alluded to it, the precise epoch of his birth must still remain a mystery. It is nevertheless certain that in 1666 he had already shown such natural aptitude for the dramatic profession, as to be enrolled in a company of youthful comedians whose performances at the Foire Saint Germain were at that time the talk of the town; and that Molière, attracted thither by curiosity, was at once struck by his promising qualities, and not only offered him an engagement at his theatre, but volunteered to instruct him in the principles of his art. Baron gratefully accepted the proposal, and in December of the same year appeared before Louis the Fourteenth at St. Germain as Myrtil in *Mélicerte*; Madame, or, as she was called, Mdlle. Molière playing the heroine. The capricious Armande, then not on the best terms with her husband, and consequently little inclined to favour those whom she suspected of being attached to him, took an instinctive dislike to Baron,

and besides profiting by her position to subject him to frequent petty annoyances, so far forgot herself on one occasion as to box his ears in presence of the entire company. Galled by this affront, and unwilling on his patron's account openly to resent it, the young actor earnestly besought the latter to consent to a temporary cessation of his engagement, adding that he would gladly resume it as soon as, by careful study and a few years' practice on provincial boards, he had acquired that confidence in his own powers which could alone enable him to do justice to the lessons of his benefactor.

From 1667 until 1670 he led a wandering life, performing alternately in the smaller towns of Languedoc and Provence, and ultimately at Lyons and Dijon, from whence, in obedience to a summons from Molière, he hastened to rejoin his old associates, and reappeared in Paris towards the close of 1670 as Domitien in Corneille's *Tite et Bérénice*. This first attempt was comparatively a failure; Racine's tragedy on the same subject, admirably played by the actors of the Hôtel de Bourgogne, bore away the palm, and it was not until the following year that the production of *Psyché* gave him an opportunity of displaying his rare personal advantages and the incontestable superiority of his talent. The character entrusted to him was that of L'Amour, Mdlle. Molière representing *Psyché*; and if we may believe contemporary accounts, the fickle fair one was so captivated by the graceful bearing of her stage lover, that before many weeks had elapsed her former prejudice against him had given way to a more tender sentiment, which, we are led to suppose, was not unwillingly reciprocated by the gallant Cupidon.

After the death of Molière in 1673, Baron transferred his valuable services to the Hôtel de Bourgogne, and in 1680 was universally regarded as the leading actor of that theatre, to which those of the Palais Royal and the Marais had recently been united; from this period, until his first retirement in 1691, he remained exclusively in possession of the chief tragic and comic parts in the ancient répertoire, and by the force of his genius ensured the success of even such indifferent writers as Campistron and Pradon.

Physically, he had everything in his favour; he was tall and excellently proportioned, and his noble and expressive countenance, a perfect type of masculine

* Marshal Fabert was more fortunate on a similar occasion. Having been wounded by a splinter in the leg, the surgeon insisted on its being cut off; but the old soldier would not hear of it. "No," he said, "death shall have me as I am, or not at all," and ultimately recovered.

beauty, sufficed of itself to rivet the attention of the spectator; his voice was pure, liquid, and sonorous, and nothing could surpass the faultless harmony of his intonation. Contrary to the habit of his predecessors, who declaimed the verses of Corneille and Racine with unvarying monotony, pausing at the end of each line to take breath, and utterly repudiating any break in their sing-song measure, he avoided all unnecessary emphasis, spoke naturally, and heightened the effect of his delivery by judiciously disregarding the regularity of the rhythm. His gestures were simple and dignified, free from exaggeration and invariably appropriate; "even his silence," to quote a contemporary writer, "was eloquent." He possessed in a remarkable degree the invaluable quality of presence of mind, the following instance of which among many others has been recorded. One evening, the tragedy of *Mithridate* had been substituted at the last moment without his knowledge for that of *Phèdre*; Baron, entering as usual attended by his confidant, had already commenced his part of *Hippolyte*, when the prompter apprised him in a whisper that the piece had been changed. Far from betraying any surprise, he immediately assumed another look and tone, and to the astonishment of the public, who had anticipated some hesitation, coolly addressed his companion in the words of *Zépharès*, "*On nous faisait, Arbate, un fidèle rapport.*" Racine was very partial to him, and at the rehearsal of one of his tragedies, after explaining to the other actors the manner in which he desired their characters to be played, turned to Baron, saying: "As for you, monsieur, I need give you no instructions; your own intelligence will tell you more than any words of mine could possibly do." Notwithstanding, however, the friendly feeling that existed between them, the poet was not altogether exempt from the traditional irritability of his race; and on one occasion, when the actor had ventured to speak disparagingly of a piece he had just read, he angrily retorted: "Baron, I have summoned you hither to take a part in my tragedy, not to find fault with it." As the narrator of this anecdote shrewdly adds: "If an author at the present day were to say as much, he would run a great risk of never seeing his piece played at all."

Baron's chief defect was his excessive vanity; conscious of his artistic supe-

riority, he maintained that the public were bound to consider his appearance before them as a mark of condescension on his part, and wholly declined their right to criticise his acting. While performing *Agamemnon* in *Iphigénie en Aulide*, he began his opening speech in so low a tone as not to be distinctly heard by those at a distance from the stage; upon which a malcontent in the pit exclaimed, "Louder!" "Were I to speak louder I should speak ill," he replied with perfect calmness, and continued in the same key as before.* "Every hundred years," he once declared in a transport of self-admiration, "one may see a *Cæsar*, but it requires two thousand to produce a *Baron*, and since *Roscus* I know no one equal to myself." Nay, he even objected to the wording of the royal grant of his pension, which ran thus: "My treasurer will pay *Michel Boyron*, called *Baron*, one of my comedians," etc., and was on the point of refusing to accept it; but the amount being three thousand livres, a considerable sum in those days, he thought better of it, and contented himself with declaiming against the want of respect shown him, and pocketing the money.

His coachman and running footman having been one day beaten by those of the *Marquis de Biron*, with whom he was on familiar terms, he complained bitterly of the affront and demanded redress, repeating incessantly the words "your servants" and "mine," until the *marquis*, annoyed by his importunity, abruptly closed the discussion by saying, "My good *Baron*, why have you servants?"

Baron was subject, off the stage, to occasional fits of absence of mind, and it is recorded that one day, when in a hurry to arrive at the theatre, he hired a sedan-chair, and finding that the bearers did not progress fast enough, got out, and taking the place of one of them, started off at a rapid pace with the empty chair behind him, and never discovered the absurdity of his position until he reached his destination.

In 1691, when at the height of his

* Apropos of this piece, a lady, not overburdened with classical knowledge, who had inherited a collection of old paintings, showing them to him one day, pointed out a particular picture, and asked him if he knew what the subject was. "Certainly, madame," said Baron, "it represents the sacrifice of *Iphigénie en Aulide*." "That is impossible," she replied, "for it has been in my family above a century, and *Monsieur Racine* only wrote his tragedy ten years ago."

reputation, and without any ostensible motive, he signified his intention of retiring from the stage, and, the permission of Louis the Fourteenth having been with difficulty obtained, Baron appeared for the last time October 21st, as Ladislas in Rotrou's *Venceslas*. Various reasons have been assigned for this step; by some it was attributed to the King's refusal to confer on him the title of director of the Comédie, hitherto managed by the actors themselves; and by others to his desire to liberate himself from the restrictions then imposed by the clergy on all members of the theatrical profession. Whatever may have been the real cause of his retirement, he persisted in his resolution for nearly twenty-nine years; and it was not until the annual close of the dramatic season in March, 1720, that the actor, whose duty it was to address the public on such occasions, announced for the ensuing 10th of April the reappearance of M. Baron in *Cinna*.

By this time, with the single exception of La Thorillière, all his former comrades were either dead or had left the stage. A new generation of playgoers had sprung up, to whom the name of Baron was merely a glorious tradition of the past; and few of those who had seen him in his pride of manhood yet remained to welcome their ancient favourite. His celebrity, however, had survived his prolonged absence; and such was the general curiosity to behold him that, as soon as the doors were opened, every seat in the house was occupied, the Regent Duke of Orleans, attended by a numerous train of courtiers, being present. Never, even in the palmy days of his youth, had he excited greater transports of enthusiasm than on this memorable evening. Notwithstanding his advanced age he exhibited no trace of decrepitude, but proved that the lapse of time had neither impaired his physical energy nor the impassioned fervour of his delivery. His return was a source of great profit to the receipts of the theatre, which night after night was crowded to excess. He performed successively the characters he had formerly made his own, and both in tragedy and comedy was pronounced by the best critical judges to be unrivalled. His example stimulated Adrienne Lecouvreur and Quinault Dufresne to new efforts, and prevented them from adopting the false declamatory tone, which, since his retirement, had again become the fashion. The latter artist, indeed, then a young

man, may be said to have been mainly indebted for his subsequent excellence to his careful study of so admirable a model. During the nine years constituting the second period of Baron's dramatic career, he added twelve original characters to his ordinary répertoire; these, however, with the exception of Voltaire's *Mariamne* and Brébillon's *Pyrrhus* (no very favourable specimens, by the way, of their respective authors), were totally unworthy of his talent, and owed the ephemeral success obtained by them solely to the popularity of their interpreter.

In certain parts assumed by him the disparity between his own age and that of the personage represented bordered on the ridiculous. For instance, when La Motte produced his tragedy *Les Machabées*, the character of the youthful Misaël was entrusted to Baron, then at the very least sixty-eight years old. This singular anomaly gave rise to the following epigram:

Le vieux Baron, pour l'honneur d'Israël,
Fait le rôle enfantin du jeune Misaël,
Et, pour rendre la scène exacte,
Il se fait raser à chaque acte.

On another occasion, while playing *Antiochus* in *Rodogune*, his mother, *Cleopatra*, was personated by Mdlle. Balicourt, then in her teens; Mdlle. Duclos, who was past fifty, being the *Rodogune*. When in the course of the piece *Cleopatra* summoned them to her side and addressed them as "my children," the audience burst into a shriek of laughter, and it was with difficulty that Mdlle. Balicourt could restrain herself from following their example. In his famous scene with *Chimène* in *The Cid*, the sexagenarian *Rodrigue* threw himself with all the vivacity of his younger days at the lady's feet, but remained unable to move until two attendants came to his rescue, and assisted him to rise. In the same tragedy his delivery of the passage:

Je suis jeune, il est vrai, mais aux âmes bien nées
La valeur n'attend pas le nombre des années,

occasioned a general titter; upon which he repeated the lines with such imposing emphasis that the mirth of the spectators instantly subsided, and the further progress of the scene was interrupted by a shout of enthusiastic applause.

Lesage, who never misses an opportunity of criticising the actors of his time, thus maliciously describes Baron in his *Diable Boiteux*: "I perceive a player who is

asleep, enjoying the pleasure of a dream that flatters him greatly. This actor is so old that there is not a soul in Madrid who can say they saw the first of him. He has been on the stage so long that one may say he is theatrified, and has talent, but is so proud and vain of it that he imagines himself superior to the rest of mankind. Would you know what this mock hero is dreaming of? That he is dying, and sees all the deities of Olympus met together to decide what they shall do with a mortal of his importance. He hears Mercury telling the council of the gods that so celebrated a comedian, after acting the part of Jupiter and the rest of the chief divinities so often, ought not to undergo the common fate of mankind, but deserves to be received among themselves. Momus applauds Mercury's opinion; but some of the other gods and goddesses being against so new an apotheosis, Jupiter, to avoid disputes, turns the old comedian into a scene." In the eleventh chapter of the third book of *Gil Blas*, the author again introduces him under the name of Signor Alonzo Carlos de la Ventoleria. "This man has been an actor; he left the stage out of caprice, and afterwards repented having done so. Did you remark his jet black locks? They are dyed, as are his eyebrows and mustachios; he is older than Saturn, but as his parents neglected at his birth to inscribe his name on the parish register, he takes advantage of this omission to pass for younger than he is by at least twenty years."

The satirical Collé, in accordance with his usual habit of praising the dead at the expense of the living, speaks highly of Baron. "When I saw him, he was seventy-two years old, and at so advanced an age he might well be excused, if his acting were less impassioned than it had probably been in his youth. He atoned for this deficiency by displaying a rare intelligence, and a majesty of deportment which I have never seen equalled; in tragedy he was natural without familiarity, and his comedy was so life-like that the spectator lost sight of the actor in the personage represented by him. When he played a king or an emperor, his entrance on the stage was invariably preceded by a procession of supernumeraries, attired as guards; and I remember that once, when performing the High-priest in *Athalie*, the attendant Levites not being at hand at a particular moment, he exclaimed im-

patiently, and loud enough to be heard by those near him: '*Pas un Léвите, mordieu! pas un seul animal de Léвите!*'" In a word, he adored his profession, and perhaps on that very account excelled in it.

In his leisure hours, Baron frequently tried his hand at dramatic composition, and contributed ten comedies to the literature of his day; some of these were ascribed at the time to the Père Delarue and other writers; but as no real Simon Pure ever openly came forward to dispute his right of paternity, it may be safely left unquestioned. The best are *L'Homme à Bonnes Fortunes*, *La Coquette*, *L'Andrienne*—in all of which he sustained the principal character—and *Les Adelphe*s. With reference to the latter, the following anecdote has been handed down to us. Some days before its production at the theatre, the witty and eccentric Duc de Roquelaure engaged the author to dine at his hotel in company with three ladies of rank, and to bring his manuscript with him. "You shall read it to us," he said; "for I am curious to see which is the least tiresome, Terence or you." Baron accepted the invitation, and at the appointed hour found himself surrounded by the fair trio, who one and all professed the greatest impatience to hear his comedy. When dinner was over, the ladies began to yawn, and asked M. de Roquelaure if he had any cards in the house. "Cards!" exclaimed the duke, "you forget that Baron is about to read his piece to us!" "So far from forgetting it," replied one of the three, "we shall be delighted to listen to him while we are playing, and thus enjoy two pleasures instead of one." She had hardly finished speaking when Baron, irritated beyond measure by this unceremonious proposal, rose abruptly from his chair, and with a low bow quitted the room, leaving the ladies in despair that their double project of enjoyment was so unexpectedly thwarted.

The farewell appearance of this renowned artist took place September 3rd, 1729, in the character of Venceslas; but so intense was his emotion that he failed to accomplish more than half his task, and was conveyed from the theatre in a state of extreme exhaustion to his own house. There he lingered until December 22nd, in the same year, when he breathed his last, after having been for the second time reconciled to the church by formally renouncing his profession. His wife, the

daughter of his old comrade La Thorillière, and herself an actress of moderate ability, survived him little more than a twelve-month.

Autographs of Baron are very uncommon, the only specimen of his handwriting we have seen being a note addressed to the treasurer of the theatre, soliciting the payment of his pension, "car," he says, "je suis sans argent." The authenticity of this document, formerly in the possession of M. de Pixérécourt, has been contested on the plea of its being undated, and therefore equally attributable to his son Étienne or his grandson François, both successively members of the Comédie Française, the former of whom died in 1711, eighteen years before his father, and the latter about 1770.

Beneath one of the most esteemed portraits of this great actor, taken at an advanced period of his life, are inscribed the following lines from the pen of Jean Baptiste Rousseau:

Du vrai, du pathétique il a fixé le ton.
De son art enchanteur l'illusion divine
Prêtait un nouveau lustre aux beautés de Racine,
Un voile aux défauts de Pradon.

DOUBLEDAY'S CHILDREN.

BY DUTTON COOK,

AUTHOR OF "YOUNG MR. NIGHTINGALE," "HOBSON'S CHOICE," &c. &c.

BOOK V. THE FURTHER NARRATIVE OF BASIL DOUBLEDAY.

CHAPTER VII. PARIS.

UPON the invitation of the porter, I mounted the staircase of the house, No. 13, Rue St. Benoît. Arrived at the sixth story, I found myself in front of a black door inscribed with the legend, in white chalk—"George Guichardet"—surrounded by many flourishes, with an ironical request to visitors that they would "ring the bell"—no bell being anywhere visible. I knocked with my stick, but, for some time, in vain. I was about to retire, when the door opened suddenly; a young woman with dishevelled hair, whose attire seemed rather hastily and only partially assumed, begged me to enter. She was a model, she explained, and was giving M. George a sitting; she was also M. George's house-keeper. She was not beautiful, but her eyes were large and sparkling; her teeth—very fully revealed when she smiled—were of dazzling whiteness, and very regular.

She led the way into a large room wearing the look of a studio. Plaster casts adorned the walls, odd pieces of old armour, draperies, fencing-foils, and masks, with, in a prominent place, a skull and crossbones. An easel, bearing a large canvas, stood in the middle of the bare floor. The uniform of a National Guard rested on a chair.

A young Frenchman advanced from an inner room; he surveyed me with a curious look. Then he said gaily: "I thought it might be either a creditor or an agent of police; but I see it is neither the one nor the other."

"It is a capitalist, possibly," suggested the young woman, and then, with a glance at her incomplete toilet, she retreated in some confusion.

"In what can I serve monsieur?" asked M. Guichardet. He had a bright intelligent face, wan and worn and lined, for all its jesting expression. His beard was thick and long; his hair was clipped so closely, that he seemed to be wearing a skull-cap of black velvet.

I explained to him my mission. He grew more and more attentive as I proceeded. I noted the interested look that animated his face when I mentioned the names of Mr. Grisdale and Paul Riel. Finally, I exhibited the triangle of copper.

He took it from me with a suspicious glance over his shoulder, as though to make sure that no one stood behind him. Was this look of enquiry and misgiving habitual among conspirators? He then turned away, and appeared to subject the copper to very close examination. Were there secret marks upon it which had escaped my notice, but which were as guarantees of its authenticity?

"It is sufficient, monsieur," as he returned me the triangle, almost deferentially. "Count upon my assistance now and always. At present, I have no information to give you; but we will see Alexis—that is very necessary. Alexis can help us—or no one can."

We then spoke of more general topics. I stated that I was a correspondent of an English newspaper.

"Your letters will not lack topics," he said. "France has already given constant employment to the historians. She is about to set them to work again. We are going to shift the slides of the magic lantern. Wait only a few hours. The Government is doomed. In a little while," he said significantly, "you will see the

very stones of the city rising up against the Government."

He made some change in his dress. "Now I am at your service," he said. "We will go to Alexis. Only—we must be careful. When we are in the street, do not walk with me, but after me. Let it not be too apparent that we are together. It has been calculated that every fifth man in France is a spy. Let not the police believe us to be conspirators. The monarchy of July is being destroyed by its spies; it has become riddled and rotten as an old moth-eaten coat."

We traversed many streets. I was struck by the number of idle people passing to and fro. They carried no arms, and seemed moved chiefly by curiosity, yet they had an air of expectation. They were streaming along like sightseers to some show of more than ordinary importance.

"Stop," I said. "What is that? Listen!"

Was it distant thunder, or the reverberation of some far-off cannonade? No, it was more sustained and musical.

"They are singing *The Marseillaise* upon the boulevards," said M. Guichardet, with a curious smile. "The people already feel the electric influence. They are rising; the battle-song precedes the battle. You hear? The tune has changed. That is *Mourir pour la Patrie*—the chorus of Girondins in the drama called the *Chevalier Maison Rouge*. Each revolution has its own song. It was *La Parisienne* in 1830. Well, we will make *Mourir pour la Patrie* serve our turn. This way."

We had passed through a wicket, crossed a courtyard, and were ascending a winding staircase.

"Wait here a moment." I was left alone on the third or fourth landing. M. Guichardet went on to the floor above. I could hear a sudden hum of voices as a door opened. Immediately all was silence again.

"Ascend, please." I mounted the stairs. A hand grasped mine. I was led into a large, darkened room. Curtains screened the windows, and the little light of the dreary February day was in great part excluded. Round a small earthenware stove or furnace, which emitted a crimson glow, several figures were gathered—all seemed to be of the student class. They were cutting what looked like a portion of a leaden cistern into fragments, melting

these in an iron ladle, and pouring the liquid metal into bullet-moulds.

A tall, dark-complexioned, handsome young man, with a *Henri Quatre* beard, sat at a small table drawn near to the window, and littered with papers. His frock-coat was buttoned to the chin, a sword-belt girt him, a silk handkerchief without collar was wound round his neck. There was something military in his aspect. This, as I gathered, was M. Alexis.

He did not appear to notice my presence. He was speaking to some two or three who stood in front of his table. One, a workman, to judge by his blouse (but it was not easy invariably to distinguish the *étudiant* and the *blousier*), was exhibiting his stained and wounded hands. Attempts had been made to construct barricades in the *Rue Royale*, but the first efforts of the insurgents had been overcome by the activity of the mounted municipal guards. The railings of the Church of the Assumption had been torn away and employed now as pikes, in feeble resistance to the charges of the cavalry, and now as crow-bars and levers to force up the paving-stones and prize the shop-shutters.

M. Alexis listened without comment. He seemed more interested in the news brought by another of his friends or adherents. The artillery of Vincennes had been ordered to proceed to the *Faubourg St. Antoine*. The roads leading to the several gates of Paris were alive with long columns of cavalry, infantry, and artillery. Paris was to be dragooned into docility.

Further news. In the Chamber of Deputies M. Barrot had formally impeached the Ministry, and been as formally defied. The Government believed its own strength to be supreme—it was supported by a large parliamentary majority, by the favour of the king, and by the enormous garrison of Paris; to say nothing of the army marching to the forcible suppression of all opposition.

M. Alexis advanced and shook me cordially by the hand. I perceived that he was older than I had at first supposed him to be. There were streaks of gray in the chestnut of his hair, in the crisp curls of his beard; and his face was deeply furrowed.

"You are an Englishman—that makes you a friend at once. A poet too—that makes you still more a friend. And then you are a friend of old friends of mine. I have intelligence of you, not merely dating from to-day. I have read your

poems. Mr. Grisdale has written of you. He is known to many of us. And you are the friend, it would seem, of Mr. Leveridge, your great English painter. It is, you see, not only the police who possess information."

"You know Mr. Leveridge?"

"Certainly. But I have not seen him for long years. I was myself a painter, but not of his fame. He was in Paris in the days of July. But the good man is not a politician. He stayed peacefully in the gallery of the Louvre painting a Venus, while we fought in the streets and demolished a monarchy. But the snake was only scotched, not killed, as you say in England; and we have now our work to do over again.

"But we are sure of your sympathy," he resumed, after a pause. "Only bear in mind that desperate men cannot be dainty. We are struggling for our lives now as well as for our freedom. Very likely you will see things that will surprise and shock you. Do not shrink from us on that account. You English conquered your liberties from the hands of tyrants long, long ago. It was not a peaceful victory; fire and sword played their parts. Well, if cannon are to roar again, if blood is to flow once more in the streets of Paris, remember that our cause is just, that we are rising to overthrow a cruel and odious tyranny; that we are fighting that our country France may be free. What you did in the past, that we will do again in the present. With this difference—we will better your example. We will have no more kings. But you are merely a spectator of the historic drama upon which the curtain is rising; you seek information concerning Paul Riel, sometime resident in England. He is a relative of yours, it would appear."

I explained that Paul Riel was my brother-in-law, that he had married my sister.

"I have little news to give you at present. There has been some accident or misapprehension; something has occurred to prevent the presence amongst us of M. Paul Riel. He was looked for, anxiously expected; but he has not arrived. I cannot just now account for this; but information on the subject will certainly reach me in the course of a few hours. M. Riel left England without difficulty. He had assumed an English name, and carried an English passport. He called himself Mr. Doubleday."

I started. "My name!" I said.

"No; it seems that he called himself Mr. Nicholas Doubleday."

"My brother's name!"

"Well, we may presume that he had permission, or thought himself entitled without permission, to assume for the occasion the name of his brother-in-law. In such cases, as you are aware, any name serves; it is a mere formality."

But I could not but picture to myself Nick's indignation at his name being borrowed by Paul—and for a treasonable purpose!

"M. Riel duly arrived at Boulogne," M. Alexis continued. "So far we have distinct information. But he did not reach Paris. As I have said, I cannot just now account for his absence. The matter is of less importance than it threatened to be. A great change has come over the situation of affairs. I can say no more now. Let our friend Guichardet know your address. You may rely upon receiving news of Paul with the utmost promptitude."

M. Guichardet conducted me from the presence of M. Alexis. I was in the streets again, mingling with the restless crowd, sharing its air of curiosity and expectation, moving on with it, I scarce knew whither.

Who was Alexis? As I inferred, he was the president of one of the many committees of insurrection, delegates of the secret societies, holding their meetings in various parts of Paris, and especially at the offices of the republican journals.

The crowd, swelled by other crowds which had assembled in front of the Madeleine, the Polytechnic School, the quays, the Places of the Châtelet, the Bourse, and the Bastille, now seemed mechanically converging to a special point, the Chamber of Deputies. The weather was bitterly cold, the heavens were overcast with dull leaden clouds; but there was still a holiday look about the streets; the factories and workshops were closed, the shops in the leading thoroughfares had opened only for a few hours. There was nothing menacing, as I judged, about the aspect of the people; it is true they now and then sung their revolutionary songs with great fervour; but they carried no arms; they cried simply: "Vive la Réforme!" "Could this be a revolution?" I asked myself. It was more like a festival. The band of a regiment of chasseurs was calmly playing operatic airs in front of the Chamber. Troops of dragoons were trotting to and

fro to disperse the crowd, or as though to form a path for the passage of some state pageant. There were droll incidents, such as happen on holiday occasions, which set the crowd laughing loudly. To escape the dragoons, who were quickening the pace of their horses, and even showing some inclination to charge the people, many lookers-on jumped into the empty basins of the fountains upon the Place de la Concorde. But presently the fountains began to play; escape from the basins became very necessary. Hats were damaged irreparably; clothes were soaked through and through. Especially the crowd laughed at the better dressed of its members who suffered in this way. For the crowd in truth was composed of all classes; glossy frock-coats stood beside blouses; the gloved and the ungloved, the booted and the shoeless, seemed on the best terms with each other. There were many women present; the boys were quite innumerable. They now defied and now humbled themselves before the soldiery. They were seen bravely digging up paving-stones, and in another moment, with cowardly zeal, replacing them at the bidding of a municipal guard standing over them with drawn sword. But the soldiers' backs turned, they were at work again, amassing the materials of a barricade. These proceedings were repeated again and again, much to the amusement of the bystanders. Assuredly nothing very serious seemed likely to occur.

But now over the heads of the people could be seen the glitter of a line of bayonets: the infantry had appeared upon the scene. The artillery occupied the Rue de Bourgogne. The crowd which had been advancing towards the empty Chamber, which had even forced the gates, and penetrated to the gardens, were now forced back by the steady pressure of the masses of troops.

Not a shot had been fired; not a life had been lost. The daylight was waning; I hurried back to my lodgings to write my letter to *The Hourglass*, to address also a

few lines of encouragement to Doris. The Revolution had begun, though as yet there was little evidence of the fact. I was again in the streets after nightfall. It was reported that the Ministry had been dismissed, and that the people were already pacified. The troops had not returned to their barracks; they bivouacked in the streets and open spaces. There had been a bonfire of chairs in the Champs Elysées, and the guard there had been attacked, chiefly by showers of stones, and deprived of their arms.

Meanwhile, barricades were rising in various parts of the city, as though in accordance with some settled plan. The ground was thus marked out for the conflicts of the morrow.

I was too excited to sleep. All night long it seemed to me that I could hear, now near at hand, and now far off, the singing of the crowd and sudden beating of drums—the *rappel* of the National Guard.

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